

MARCH 2014

HELLO WORLD



When I was young, a big thrill was to camp in the backyard. Beautiful stars, the fresh air, the sounds of crickets and the thought that wild animals would appear drew me outside. If you are Jim Herson, your children's dreams climb a little higher. Jim is a Senior Computer Scientist at SRI International and an amazing rock climber. Rock climbing must be in his DNA! His kids, Kara (14) and Connor (10), had been itching to climb Yosemite's Half Dome since they were climbing out of their cribs. His son climbed Half Dome at age 8 and his daughter climbed the face at age 12. His wife Anna has also climbed the face of Half Dome and El Capitan. There is just no way to explain it as well as Jim does — his stories and more pictures are at: <http://vocer.sri.com/herson/climbing/tr/niad-kara.html> and <http://vocer.sri.com/herson/climbing/tr/halfdome-kara.html>.

Jim has worked at SRI International for 31 years, except for one year when he took a leave of absence to bike around Asia. You can work at SRI for years and never meet everyone. While in Asia he first met his wife Anna, who was also working at SRI at the time (she is now an Engineering Manager at Intuit). Their whole family bikes but mostly they rock climb — a lot! They climb weekdays at local climbing gyms and most weekends at Yosemite or the Sierra. At one point, Jim held three of the speed records for Yosemite: one for climbing Half Dome and two on El Capitan.

Jim works in the Robotics Lab specializing in computer vision. Computer vision involves identifying and locating objects in an image or video. The located objects can then be picked up by robots for assembly or avoided during navigation. Their longest running program was for the United States Postal Service, locating address blocks to automate letter and parcel sorting. Starting in the 1980s, the lab built a prototype system that processed one mail piece every 20 minutes. Much iteration later, the address block location technology was deployed in every postal sorting facility in the country, processing 200 billion pieces of mail a year (at a more rapid speed). This further evolved into SRI's Video OCR Program, which locates and reads text in a video stream. SRI recently sold the Video OCR patents for \$2.3M.

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